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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 16, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: McGeorge Bundy

With reference to our telephone conversation, there is attached our draft of the reply from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Macmillan.

The Department of State, I understand, has been charged with coordinating replies to Macmillan's recent communications so that the final draft of this letter will be reaching you probably today or tomorrow through the Department.



John J. McCloy
Adviser to the President
on Disarmament

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Number 7 of 2 copies, Series A222

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

ACD 377/2

May 16, 1961

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Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Your helpful letter of April 27, 1961, shows that we have drawn similar conclusions from the recent behavior of the Soviet delegation at the Geneva nuclear test ban talks. I, too, have come to believe that the Soviet Government will not change its position unless Chairman Khrushchev can be persuaded that the alternative to a satisfactory treaty is the ultimate resumption of tests with the consequent damage to prospects for disarmament which that would mean. I propose to exert every effort to persuade him that a fair and reliable agreement is in his interest and in ours.

= In my communications with Mr. Khrushchev regarding a possible meeting I shall refer to the need for a close examination of the test ban problem along the lines you suggest. I would not wish, however, to single out the test talks as the primary object of my discussions with him. I therefore do not believe we should address letters to Mr. Khrushchev on this subject prior to my meeting with him.

If I fail to reach any understandings with Mr. Khrushchev and if by that time the position that the Soviets have

The Right Honorable
Harold Macmillan, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
London.

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have maintained in Geneva has not substantially changed, I believe the United States should be ready to resume nuclear tests for both seismic research and weapons development. I am now engaged in a thorough review with my advisers of the significance of carrying out nuclear detonations in the various categories. Pending this review I am not prepared at this time to suggest either the timing or the character of such tests. Presumably a seismic research explosion could be prepared within a shorter period of time than any really significant weapons test series. Any nuclear explosion would, of course, be underground and an announcement would be made that we had no intention of resuming atmospheric or underwater tests.

The essential thing for us is that the United States be in a position to exercise the freedom of action which has been reserved by my government since December 1959. I naturally hope very much that our two governments will be able to support each other's position.

I believe that if this country does not conduct a test prior to the resumption of general disarmament negotiations in August of this year, the difficulties of our doing so thereafter would be much increased. These are only my preliminary thoughts as I have indicated. I shall, of course, communicate with you the results of my thinking on the basis of our review and I would appreciate receiving your own.

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I believe that the question of the security of the free nations of the world is the paramount consideration for us to bear in mind in connection with the resumption of tests, but I am also impressed with the increased erosion of our own position which has been based upon adequate systems of control and inspection as a concomitant of measures for arms control and reduction. The interminable continuation of the moratorium through the indefinite extension of the test ban negotiations seriously undermines that position. Not only is our position in the test ban rendered less credible through such delays, but our ability to press the principle of inspection in connection with other disarmament measures is impaired. These implications are in addition to those which rise from the recent Soviet line of attack on the effectiveness of the UN and indeed upon any international peace-keeping machinery. I think all these considerations point to the need for our taking a definite position without further attenuations, always assuming that, let us say, by the middle of June, we have not received any indication of a substantial change in the Soviet attitudes.

Finally, I am glad to say that I believe we approach these decisions in a strong position because of the good record at Geneva to which the close cooperation of our delegations has so much contributed.

Sincerely yours,

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